



Arizona Emergency Services Association Mid-Year Conference January 10, 2008 Tucson, Arizona

“Lessons Learned”

Speaker Biography

Leesa Berens Morrison

Appointed by Governor Janet Napolitano, Leesa Berens Morrison became the first confirmed director of the newly-created state Department of Homeland Security in December 2006. Ms. Morrison is responsible for developing Arizona’s statewide strategy on homeland security preparedness and for overseeing the federal grant funding process.

Ms. Morrison immediately took a lead role in Homeland Security and Border Safety on a local and national level. In January 2007, she became the chair of the Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center Oversight Committee, co-chair of the National Governors Association Governors Homeland Security Advisory Council Border Security Committee, as well as co-chair of the Border Governors’ Conference Border Security Work Table. She also now co-chairs the Governor’s Emergency Preparedness Oversight Council.

Ms. Morrison served as the director of the state’s Department of Liquor Licenses and Control, a position she held since January 2003. While director of the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control, she was appointed by the Governor to serve on a Blue Ribbon Panel to investigate the longest prison hostage crisis in the history of the United States. In June 2005, Ms. Morrison was elected western chair of the National Conference of State Liquor Administrators.

In July 2005, as part of her border security program, Governor Napolitano directed Ms. Morrison to create and lead the Arizona Fraudulent Identification Taskforce. An integral part of the Governor’s “Strong Border, Secure Arizona” initiative, the taskforce was a statewide multi-agency effort that investigated and prosecuted the largest sellers and manufacturers of fraudulent identifications in the state.

Previously, Ms. Morrison served for 17 years as an Arizona assistant attorney general practicing administrative, civil and criminal law. During the last 12 years at the Attorney General’s Office, she served as a prosecutor in the Criminal Division. Prior to her service at the Attorney General’s Office, she spent two years in private practice emphasizing in general civil litigation.

She earned her bachelor’s degree in Public Policy/Government from Pomona College and a law degree from the University of Arizona where she was a member of the Law Review. She has served on the Board of Directors for the University of Arizona Law College since 1985.

She is a member of the State Bar of Arizona and has served as president of the Maricopa County Bar Association and as the Arizona State Bar Delegate to the American Bar Association House of Delegates. Ms. Morrison has also been selected as a fellow of the American Bar Foundation. Her legal peers have given her an **AV** rating with Martindale-Hubbell.